DC
BATMAN
387
75¢
CAN. 95¢
U.K. 35p
SEPT. 85
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
BY
DOUG MOENCH &
TOM MANDRAKE
MANDRAKE
1
WHAT TERRIFYING SECRET LURKS...
"BEHIND THE BLACK MASK!"

THE BATCAVE:
EBON MASQUERY
An evening of Dark Disguise
at Wayne Manor
Friday, June 6, 8 PM
Leave your True Face Behind
RSVP
GOOD JOB, ALFRED-- BLACK MASK WON'T BE ABLE TO RESIST AN INVITATION LIKE THIS.
BUT WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE, BATMAN?
IT'S THE MOST OBVIOUS TRAP IMAGINABLE.
WHICH IS WHY HE'LL COME.

DOUG MOENCH . TOM MANDRAKE . JOHN COSTANZA . ADRIENNE ROY . LEN WEIN
WRITER ARTIST LETTERER COLORIST EDITOR.

BATMAN 387 (USPS 045-340). Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Inc., Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 1308-F, Fort Lee, NJ 07024. Annual subscription rate $9.00. Outside U.S.A. $11.00 in U.S. funds. Copyright © 1985 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Sanford Schwarz & Co., 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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Phil & Doc Scan

THE CRAFT..
EBON MASQUERY
An evening of Dark Disguise
at Wayne Manor
Friday, June 6, 8 PM
Leave your True Face Behind
RSVP
IT'S OBVIOUSLY A TRAP, BLACK MASK.
OF COURSE, TUPENG-- AND MOREOVER, IT'S OBVIOUSLY AN OBVIOUS TRAP.
BUT YOU STILL PLAN TO GO?
OF COURSE, THESPIS.
HOW COULD I RESIST?
2

CAVE:
ROMAN SIONIS WALKED AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY FORTUNE--TO BECOME ANOTHER PERSON IN THE FORM OF BLACK MASK, BUILDING A NEW FORTUNE THROUGH CRIME.
HE'S FEELING ALL-POWERFUL, INVINCIBLE...
CRYPT:
LIKE ALL MEN OF ARTIFICIAL WEALTH--INHERITED WEALTH--BRUCE WAYNE IS ARROGANT ENOUGH TO THINK HE CAN DO ANYTHING, EVEN UNMASK ME...
...AS LONG AS IT'S DONE WITHIN THE FALSE SECURITY OF HIS POWER CENTER.
HIS DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR, OF THINKING HE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING--
--ARE PROBABLY REINFORCED BY A CONVICTION THAT ROMAN SIONIS CAN NO LONGER BE EMBARRASSED--
--BECAUSE HE NO LONGER "IS" ROMAN SIONIS.
WAYNE'S WEALTH MAKES HIM FEEL INSULATED--
--PROTECTED FROM THE DANGERS EVERYONE ELSE FACES.
HE'S ENACTING ROMAN SIONIS' VENGEANCE--
--MURDERING THE WAYNE FOUNDATION EXECUTIVES WHO'VE TAKEN OVER HIS JANUS COSMETICS CORPORATION--BUT IT'S BLACK MASK WHO'S DOING IT.
AFTER THE MANNER OF HIS EXECUTIVES' DEATHS, THIS "MASQUERADE" IS SHEER TITILLATION FOR HIM.
HE'LL GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF LAYING A TRAP, BUT HE DOESN'T REALLY EXPECT ME TO ATTEND...
MASQUERADE
3

TWO THINGS ARE CERTAIN. FIRST, ABSOLUTELY NO WAYNE FOUNDATION EXECUTIVES CAN BE INVITED.
AND SECOND, WE CAN'T HAVE TOO MANY COPS STATIONED AROUND THE MANOR--OR EVEN HE WON'T BE AUDACIOUS ENOUGH TO ENTER THE TRAP...
THE ONLY BAIT WILL BE THE HEAD OF THE FOUNDATION--ME.
...MEANING YOU'LL HAVE TO BE READY, ROBIN, IN CASE ANYTHING GOES WRONG.
MY SPECIALTY, BOSS--BUT WHO'RE YOU GONNA BE AT THIS BASH?
BRUCE WAYNE--IN DISGUISE.
TWO THINGS ARE CERTAIN. THE FIRST IS THAT I CAN'T ATTEND WEARING THIS MASK...
AND THE SECOND IS THAT GOING ALONE WOULD DRAW TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO MYSELF...
AND SO, MY DEAR CIRCE, MY BEAUTIFUL WITCH...OUR FIRST DATE SINCE CHANGING FACES.
BUT IF NOT YOUR OWN MASK, BOSS, THEN--?
YES... A DIFFICULT CHOICE... BUT I THINK--
4

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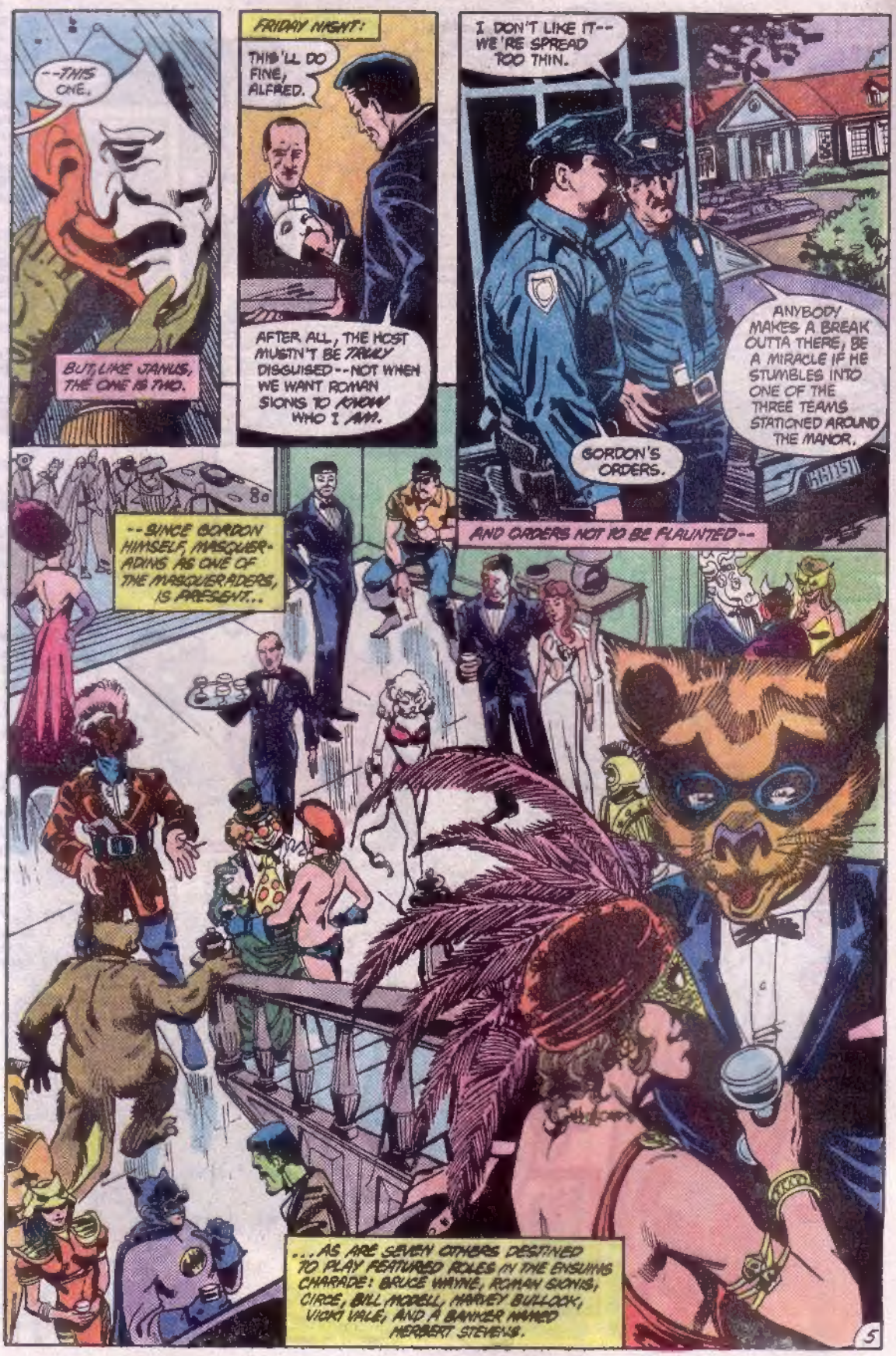

--THIS ONE.
BUT, LIKE JANUS, THE ONE IS TWO.
FRIDAY NIGHT!
THIS'LL DO FINE, ALFRED.
AFTER ALL, THE HOST MUSTN'T BE TOTALLY DISGUISED--NOT WHEN WE WANT ROMAN SIONIS TO KNOW WHO I AM.
I DON'T LIKE IT--WE'RE SPREAD TOO THIN.
ANYBODY MAKES A BREAK OUTTA THERE, BE A MIRACLE IF HE STUMBLES INTO ONE OF THE THREE TEAMS STATIONED AROUND THE MANOR.
GORDON'S ORDERS.
AND ORDERS NOT TO BE FLAUNTED--
--SINCE GORDON HIMSELF, MASQUERADING AS ONE OF THE MASQUERADERS, IS PRESENT...
...AS ARE SEVEN OTHERS DESTINED TO PLAY FEATURED ROLES IN THE ENSUING CHARADE: BRUCE WAYNE, ROMAN SIONIS, CIRCE, BILL MORELL, HARVEY BULLOCK, VICKI VALE, AND A BANKER NAMED HERBERT STEVENS.

SOME MASKS SUCCEED...
ANY IDEA, ALFRED?
SIX POSSIBLES, SIR--AND I'LL TRY TO NARROW IT DOWN FURTHER.
GOOD.
AND AS ALFRED HEADS FOR THE FIRST OF SIX, BRUCE MINGLES...
HOPE YOU'RE ENJOYING YOURSELF, MYSTERY LADY, AND IF NOT, PERHAPS I CAN--
DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, MR. WAYNE? AT ONE TIME YOU COULD HAVE, AND MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE WORN THIS MASK THEN...
...BUT THAT TIME HAS PASSED.
VICKY VALE?! BUT...YOUR...YOUR--
MY BODY, BRUCE?
YES, IT HAS CHANGED, HASN'T IT? I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT.
AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--
--I'M LOOKING FOR MY DATE.
YOU DON'T MEAN BILL MORELL--?
HARDLY, WAYNE...
WE'VE BOTH LOST HER NOW--TO SOME BARBARIAN WHOSE BRAINS ARE PACKED INTO HIS BICEPS... BUT UNLIKE YOU, THE ONLY WAY I CAN BE HAPPY ABOUT IT--
--IS BY HIDING BEHIND A CLOWN MASK.
WELL, NOBODY SAID THIS'D BE EASY...
6

SOME MASKS DON'T.
CHAMPAGNE, MR. STEVENS?
EH--? GOOD LORD, ALFRED...!
HOW ON EARTH DID YOU KNOW IT WAS ME?
I DIDN'T, SIR--I WAS MERELY GUESSING.

OTHERS LIE.
I'LL TAKE OFF MY MASK IF YOU'LL TAKE OFF YOURS.
MY MASK IS HIDDEN.

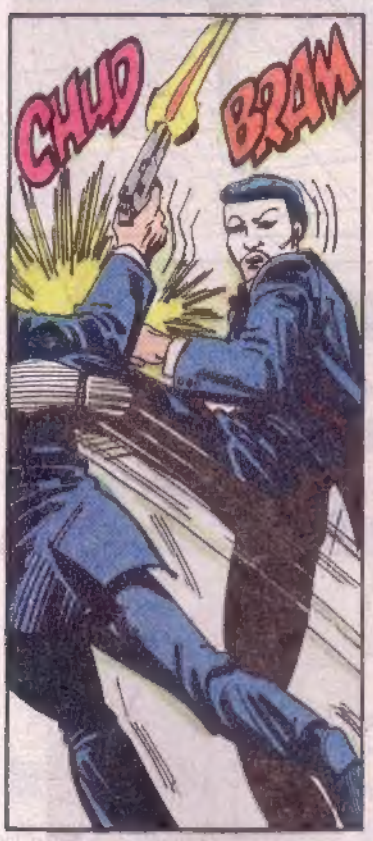
WHILE, UP IN JASON TODD'S ROOM...
ALL MASKED UP WITH NOWHERE TO GO.
ALMOST WISH SOMETHING WOULD GO WRONG-- SO I COULD JOIN THE FUN.

CHAMPAGNE, MR. MARCONI?
ALFRED, HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS ME?
JUST A GUESS, SIR--PART OF THE FUN.

SORRY, BABE, BUT I JUST CAN'T RESIST ANY LONGER...
YAAAHHH!!

OH, I G-GET IT... YOU'RE WEARIN' TWO MASKS...
DON'T WE ALL?
SO HOW ABOUT SHOWING ME THE ORCHIDS IN YOUR CONSERVATORY, BRUCE?
CERTAINLY-- RIGHT THIS WAY... STEVENS, ISN'T IT?
AH--ALFRED TOLD YOU.
ELIMINATED TWO OF THE SIX, BUT IF I'M GOING TO NARROW DOWN THE LAST FOUR...
...I'LL NEED MORE CHAMPAGNE FROM THE--
GOOD LORD! MR. MARCONI--!
NO--IT'S MR. STEVENS--WEARING A DIFFERENT MASK! BUT THEN... WHO WAS THAT IN THE RACCOON MASK WITH MR. WAYNE--?
LOVELY ORCHIDS, WAYNE, BUT LET'S FACE IT...
YOU AND YOUR FOUNDATION MADE ME LOSE FACE.
OH? THEN MY MISTAKE FOR CALLING YOU STEVENS...

AND I'M GLAD YOU COULD ACCEPT THE *INVITATION*, ROMAN.
WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN A LONG TIME, SINCE WE WERE *KIDS*, WHEN *YOUR* PARENTS WERE FRIENDS WITH *MINE*...
MY PARENTS ARE *DEAD*, WAYNE! AND YOU'RE GOING TO *JOIN* THEM IN--


CHUD
BRAM

SOUNDS LIKE *MY CUE!*
AT LAST!

FRAK!

QUICKLY-- TO THE *CONSERVATORY!!*

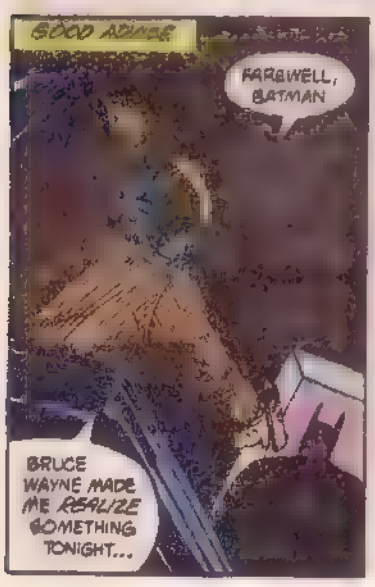
THAT'S AN EXTREMELY VALUABLE *STATUE*, ROMAN...
TAKE IT WITH YOU TO *HELL*, WAYNE!

AGH! SAVED THE STATUE AND MYSELF--
KEESH
--BUT I CAN'T PURSUE LEADS AS BRUCE WAYNE...
"...SO IT'S UP TO ROBIN NOW-- WHILE I STAGE A DECEPTION FOR MY GUESTS."
BRUCE! I WARNED YOU THIS WAS TOO RISKY..!
NO HARM DONE, GORDON, AND BESIDES,
"...SOMETHING GOOD MAY YET COME OF IT."
THANKS, BULLOCK.
NOW, IF YOU'LL ALL EXCUSE ME--
--I BELIEVE THIS PARTY HAS JUST SEEN ITS CLIMAX.
TWENTY MINUTES LATER, IN CHILL FOG...
OHO...
BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP
10

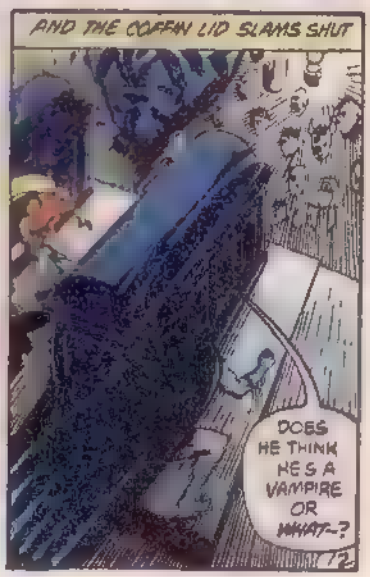
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

YES, ROBIN?
ROMAN SIONIS REALLY IS DEAD -- AND LIVING IN HIS FAMILY CRYPT.
GOOD WORK-- I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
AND BRUCE WAYNE REMOVES ONE MASK...
...TO APPLY ANOTHER--
--BECOMING A NEW AND MUCH DARKER PERSON IN THE PROCESS.
HE MEETS ROBIN AT THE PHONE BOOTH IN LESS THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES.
UH-OH.
THEY RISE UP FROM BEHIND TOMBSTONES ON EVERY SIDE--
THERE'S THE SIONIS CRYPT, BATMAN, RIGHT UP AHEAD--
--LIKE GROTESQUELY MASKED JACKS SPRINGING FROM GRAVEBOUND BOXES.
IN TRUTH, THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE 'FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF GOTHAM'!!
11

AND THEY MEAN TO KILL
SNAKK
CHUD
DOOF
THEY FAIL.
THUMP
ALL RIGHT, ROBIN.
INTO THE CRYPT.
BUT DON'T LOSE YOUR EDGE FOR AN INSTANT.


GOOD ADVICE
FAREWELL, BATMAN
BRUCE WAYNE MADE ME REALIZE SOMETHING TONIGHT...

IT'S TIME FOR ROMAN SION'S TO FULLY DIE!


AND THE COFFIN LID SLAMS SHUT
DOES HE THINK HE'S A VAMPIRE OR WHAT--?

JUST STAY SHARP, ROBIN!
WATCH OUT FOR HIS GUN WHEN I--
SWOK
NO-- THE COFFIN'S EMPTY!
A FALSE BOTTOM BATMAN, AND A TUNNEL LEADING--
OUTSIDE!
TOO LATE-- HE'S GETTING AWAY IN THAT HEARSE!
VRAOWWW
BREAK FOR OUR CAR, ROBIN-- FAST!
WE'LL CATCH HIM, BATMAN-- NOTHING CAN TOP THE BATMOBILE'S SPEED!
BUT WHERE'S HE GOING-- AND WHAT DID HE MEAN ABOUT ROMAN SIONIS FULLY DEMAND?
WHERE HE'S GOING IS OVER THE EDGE ROBIN--
--A COMPLETE PSYCHOLOGICAL REVERSE FROM SONS TO BLACK MASK.
13

STORY CONTINUES AFTER SPECIAL INSERT

THE HEARSE FINALLY STOPS AT--
THE SIONIS FAMILY ESTATE--
--ABANDONED SINCE HE TOOK UP THE MASK.
A SCARED ANIMAL--FLEEING TO ITS BURROW?
AS BLACK MASK, I'VE FAILED AT NOTHING
BUT THE ONE TIME I ATTEMPT SOMETHING AS ROMAN SIONIS, A WEAKLING LIKE BRUCE WAYNE DEFEATS ME
GOOD THING HE'S BEEN PICKING UP HIS MAIL, ANYWAY, OR HE NEVER WOULD'VE GOTTEN THAT INVITA--
THERE, ROBIN--LIGHT FROM THE SECOND FLOOR CORNER ROOM.
SAY FAREWELL, LITTLE ROMAN, AND SHED A TEAR FOR YOUR STRANGE PAST...
...CRAMMED WITH SO MANY BRIGHT TOYS... YET SO DISMALLY EMPTY.
HEADS UP, ROBIN!
YEAH--SHOULD'VE KNOWN GETTING IN HERE WAS TOO EASY...
THE BATMAN LEAPS--
--WHILE ROBIN DUCKS.
TUPENS AND THESPIS BOTH MISS.
14

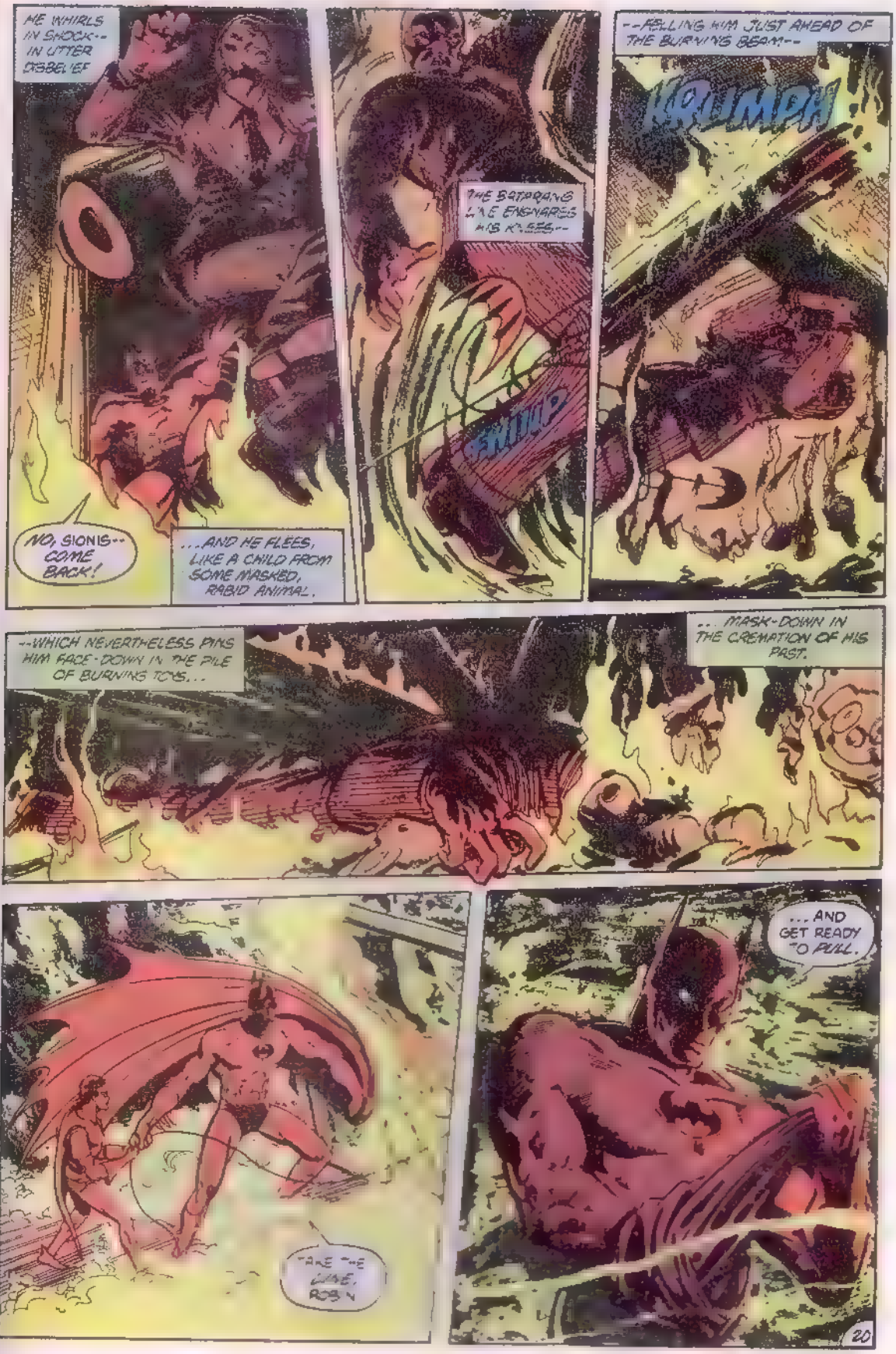
IT'S ACTUALLY RATHER SAD..
LITTLE ROMAN NEVER REALLY HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY..
.. AND NOW, SINCE BLACK MASK HAS WORK TO DO--
--LITTLE ROMAN MUST DIE.
CLOSE.
CHOK
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK HE KNEW WE WERE FOLLOWING HIM --AS IF HE WAS WAITING US TO THIS LITTLE PARTY.
BUT IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT, ROMAN ..
... FOR DARING TO LIVE AFTER I KILLED YOU.
PRECISELY CORRECT, ROBIN-- THE PARTY'S A TRAP...
HWHO
AND WE MUSTN'T CHECK OUT WITHOUT PAYING OUR RESPECTS TO THE HOST
SO, IF HE'S UP IN THAT SECOND FLOOR CORNER ROOM, BATMAN --
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
15

YOU SEE ROMAN, WHEN I WAS REBORN AS BLACK MASK YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD THE SENSE AND COURTESY TO MAKE ROOM FOR ME--
--BY DYING
SWISSHHHSSS
BE UP IN A SECOND, ROBIN.
...AS SOON AS I PUT MY KABUKI DANCE PARTNER DOWN.
BUT SINCE YOU REFUSE TO COOPERATE, ROMAN, YOU MUST BE EXECUTED.
IF YOU DON'T DIE--
--HOW CAN I ATTAIN THE TOTAL POWER EMBODIED IN MY COFFINWOOD MASK-- THE TOTAL POWER OF DEATH?
SPRAKT
HOWK
THESPIS MAY FALL FARTHER, BUT TUPENG'S FALL IS JUST AS FINAL.
16
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

I WONDER, LITTLE ROMAN IF YOU'LL FIND MOTHER AND FATHER WAITING FOR YOU...
SKRLITCH
.. IN HELL.
DOWN THIS CORRIDOR, ROBIN.
THE LIT ROOM'S AT THE END.
BUT--
SMOKE, BATMAN-- COMING FROM UNDER THE DOOR!
AND--
...OPENING
ALL THE OTHER DOORS, ROBIN...
THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY, IT SEEMS, BOASTS A LARGE MEMBERSHIP..
17

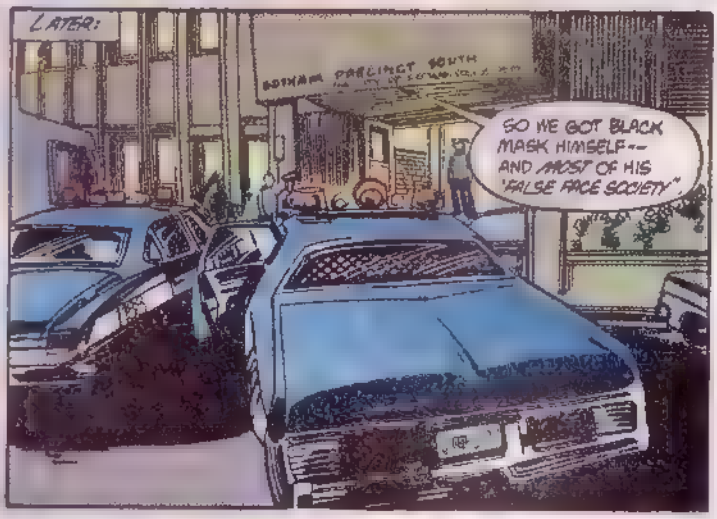
BUT IT IS TIME, NOW--
WAK!
--TO PAY THEIR DUES.
THROKK
SPOOM
BRAM
THIS IS THE LAST GUN, ROBIN!
BRAM
SHUMP!
YEAH-- ALL DOWNHILL TO THE UNMASKING.
GHUD
KRATCH

THAT'S ALL OF 'EM, BATMAN--BUT THE SMOKE'S GETTING PRETTY THICK..
BLACK MASK MUST HAVE A REGULAR INFERNO IN THERE...
THINK HE'S REALLY TRYING TO KILL HIMSELF?
FOR A MOMENT HE STANDS PURGED OF ALL HUMANITY A FACELESS, SATAN'S MASTER OF FLAMES.
THEN THE MASK CRUMBLES.
YOU... YOU DEFEATED THEM ALL?
--THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN ON HELL, AND IT IS CLEAR THAT BLACK MASK HAS SLAIN ONLY PART OF HIMSELF
BUT EVEN AS THEY RUSH TO FIND OUT--

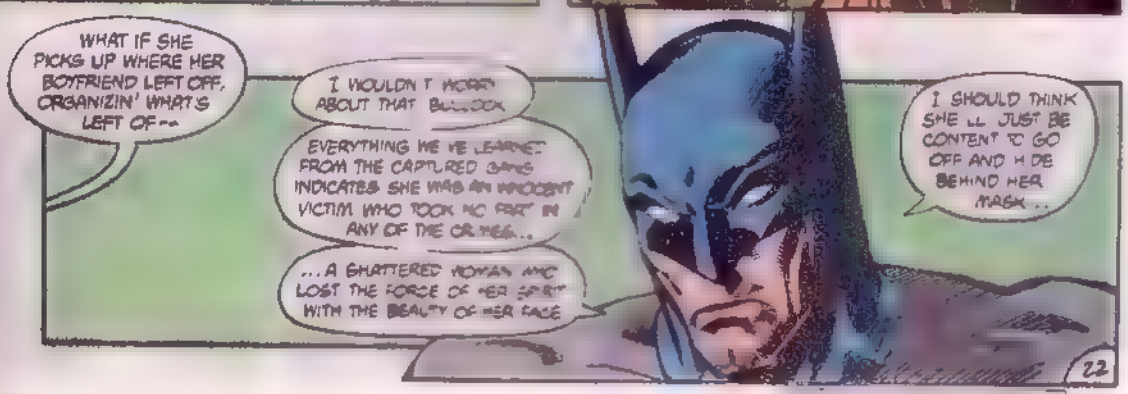

HE WHIRLS IN SHOCK-- IN UTTER DISBELIEF
NO, SIONIS-- COME BACK!
...AND HE FLEES, LIKE A CHILD FROM SOME MASKED, RABID ANIMAL.
THE BATARANG LIKE ENSNARES HIS KNEE--
--FELLING HIM JUST AHEAD OF THE BURNING BEAM--
KRUMPH!
--WHICH NEVERTHELESS PINS HIM FACE-DOWN IN THE PILE OF BURNING TOYS...
...MASK-DOWN IN THE CREMATION OF HIS PAST.
...AND GET READY TO PULL.
TAKE THE LINE, ROBIN
20

:NNGH-H!:
NOW, ROBIN-- PULL!!
ALL RIGHT, BATMAN-- HE'S CLEAR!
KRUMPH
GO CALL GORDON AND BULLOCK-- TELL THEM TO SEND THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.
ONLY THEN DOES HE REACH DOWN FOR THE CHARRED MASK, NOW BLACKER THAN BEFORE...
21

...AND WHEN IT HAS BEEN REMOVED, HIS VOICE TURNS COLD AND GRIM...
YOU SUCCEEDED, BLACK MASK.
ALL TRACE OF ROMAN SIONIS HAS BEEN OBLITERATED...

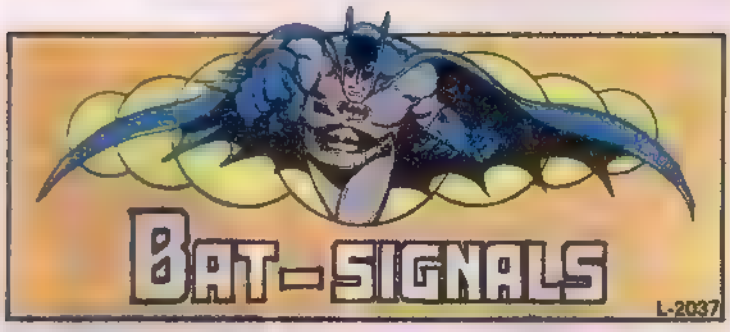


.. BUT THERE'S STILL A LOT OF THOSE MASKED WEIRDOS RUNNIN' LOOSE OUT THERE
THEY'RE DISORGANIZED BULLOCK. WE'LL PICK THEM UP WITHOUT TOO MUCH--


WHAT IF SHE PICKS UP WHERE HER BOYFRIEND LEFT OFF, ORGANIZIN' WHAT'S LEFT OF--
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT BULLOCK
EVERYTHING WE'VE LEARNED FROM THE CAPTURED GANG INDICATES SHE WAS AN INNOCENT VICTIM WHO TOOK NO PART IN ANY OF THE CRIMES...
...A SHATTERED WOMAN WHO LOST THE FORCE OF HER SPIRIT WITH THE BEAUTY OF HER FACE
I SHOULD THINK SHE'LL JUST BE CONTENT TO GO OFF AND HIDE BEHIND HER MASK...

CONCLUDED IN THE FOLLOWING

EPILOGUE: THE ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE, ONE MONTH LATER...
ROMAN SIONIS ? OH YOU MUST MEAN BLACK MASK
YES, HE'S AN INMATE HERE
BUT I'M AFRAID YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE HIM TONIGHT, MISS.
HE AH
"...HE'S NOT QUITE UP TO FROMS VISITORS."
JANUS JANUS. JANUS
THAT'S ALL RIGHT--I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO SEE HIM
JUST TELL HIM A WITCH WAS HERE...
GOOD LORD--YOUR FACE.
...AND GIVE HIM THIS.
HE'LL UNDERSTAND
THE NIGHT WIND IS BITTER...
AND SO EACH NARROW CAMERA CAGE...
NEXT ISSUE: MIRROR MASTER AND CAPTAIN BOOMERANG!



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666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10103

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Dear Doug, Gene, and Alfredo,

BATMAN #383 was a wonderful little pause in between major story lines. "Just as Night Follows Day ..." was every bit as fun and interesting as a two-issue story line with Batman tackling a foe like the Joker. It was genuinely funny, and a joy to read, and Batman wasn't even in action for the first thirteen pages. I hope more stories such as this one pop up in future issues.

Gene's artwork, very much complemented by Alfredo's moody inks, looked better than ever here. It appeared very much like Don Newton, up until the Batman action scenes later in the book; those were clearly Gene-like with the wild panel structure and all.

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324

*****

Dear Editor,

BATMAN #383 was a little offbeat for Doug Moench, with more humor than one would expect from him (with the dialogue humor coming off better than the physical slapstick). I don't know if the idea of Batman only working at night is practical. Crooks work in broad daylight too. What happens then? And the mind of Wayne-Batman is obsessed with stopping crime on a 24-hour-a-day basis; so your hints that you only see him after dark wouldn't seem to make such practical sense.

Jason continues to get duller as a character. He's gonna be a great CPA when he grows up. Doesn't he have any 12-year-old hobbies or *normal* after-school activities?

Gene Colan's art improves greatly with Alcala inking it, and I wouldn't mind the combination a few more times.

Charles D. Brown
39 Stockton Street
Brentwood, NY 11717

Over the years, Charles, we have seen Batman operate at all hours of the day or night. Yet, statistically and psychologically, nighttime is the right part of the day for the Batman to be his most effective. One of the reasons he gave up actively running the Wayne Foundation was to be free at all hours to do the Batman's work. As for Jason, Doug has been giving some thought to his situation. Issue 383 saw the beginning of his attempt to work with the character. See what happens in the coming months.

Dear Bat-Editor,

Well, I think we've all had days like Batman experienced in #383: just one thing after another, in a seemingly fiendishly designed never-ending stream. However, it's nice to see that not all the crises in Batman's life are founded on earth-shaking life-and-death struggles. Sometimes a lot of little things can really add up!

It was interesting to see that Bruce was revitalized once he donned his crimefighting costume. I guess we've all got a little more energy for the things we think are really important.

This issue's final panel, with Batman falling asleep on top of a building, was both poignant and humorous. And, if I'm not mistaken, it just might be the first time we've actually seen Batman sleep in costume! And an odd sight it was indeed. The ever-vigilant, tireless, relentless avenger of the night, dozing off like some ordinary joe. The phrase "The Batman Never Rests!" shall never pass my lips again. And I hope that he isn't one of those people who leaps out of bed with a start—because that first step would be a lulu!

T.M. Maple
Box 1272 Station B
Weston, Ontario M9L 2R9
Canada

*****

Dear Len, Doug, Gene, Alfredo, and Bob,

"Just as Night Follows Day ..." was a fun story. Doug's portrayal of the sleepless Bruce Wayne (yawning all day, staying up late, bumping into things ...) reminded me of myself and medical students in general. Doug has brought a measure of characterization and humanity to these "funny" books that is unsurpassed. I enjoyed the focus on Bruce Wayne's domestic life because it clearly showed that beneath the cape and pointy ears, the fearsome Batman is just a regular guy. Picking his adopted son up from school, coping with a flat tire, and stepping into a tray of paint are all activities not *normally* associated with the Batman or Bruce Wayne!

Michael D. Dargay
4819 Okemos Road
Okemos, MI 48864

*****

Dear Editor,

After many months of crossover stories running between BATMAN and DETECTIVE COMICS, I just have to say how much I am enjoying these single-issue adventures. Really, Doug Moench has impressed me more the past couple of issues with these complete stories than he has in any of the multi-issue serials that have been the norm.

This isn't to say I didn't like his previous efforts, only that I prefer the single-issue stories to the continued tales.

"Just as Night Follows Day ..." is a perfect example of what I enjoy the most, and to be frank, it is one of the most memorable Batman stories I've [illegible] in years. If this is any indication, I think your cross-continuity with 'TEC should end. Moench is best when he can complete the story in the same issue he begins it.

Greg W. Myers
Elida, OH

The debate continues on single stories versus multiple-part tales in the letter column of 'TEC and no decision has been reached, although Doug is purposefully mixing and matching stories to give everyone something to like.

*****

Dear Len,

BATMAN #383 was a great change of pace from the drama of the past issues. It's good to see the human and humorous side of the Batman, but not too often, please.

I really liked how Bruce's fatigue almost disappeared when he became the Batman. It is not like they were two different people, but one totally committed person.

In the past we have seen Batman use yoga and self-hypnosis to relax. I was at a lecture that said fifteen minutes of hypnosis was as good as eight hours of sleep.

As for villains, how about the Spook, the Black Spider, or even the Vigilante?

[illegible]
116 Shady Lawn
Rantoul, IL 61866

We're continuing to count votes on villains to appear in forthcoming issues with Two-Face leading the pack. Your suggestions are good ones, but the Vigilante has more than enough happening to him in his own title, so a team-up or fight is unlikely for the moment. Although, Nightwing is guest-

starring in issues 20 and 21 of VIGILANTE.

*****

Dear Troops,

Usually, a Batman story is very serious with elements of comedic relief thrown in. BATMAN #383 was just the opposite, and I loved every minute of it. I think what had me hooked was when Bruce Wayne promises his pillow that he is on the way and Doug throws in the comment "A likely story." This is a story that I am sure everyone has gone through at some time and seeing it happen to someone so somber made it even more funny. I just couldn't help but smile as Bruce told Jason that he couldn't go out as Robin unless he got more rest while he himself is on the verge of collapse.

But reality has to rear its ugly head and it's business as usual for the Batman, and reality even intrudes on his dream time after he has put in a full night.

Willie Holmes
8453 S. Saginaw
Chicago, IL 60617

*****

Dear People,

BATMAN #383 was a nice change of pace. And while I'm not advocating stories of this genre all the time, I would like to see a few more. Give your heroes a break every once in a while. Surely the Batman doesn't face a super-villain every time he turns around.

You mention the return of Two-Face and Ra's al Ghūl. Well, what would it take to get the return of Batgirl? How about a mini-series for her? Or a mini-series for Nightwing or Catwoman? And while I'm at it, whatever happened to the Huntress mini-series?

Freeman R. Corey
Box 62
Washburn, ME 04786

Hopefully you didn't miss Batgirl's brief appearance in CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #4. That shows where the character is at—a very confused, lonely person who wonders if she still has what it takes to be a super-heroine. There are plans for her and they will present themselves shortly. Nightwing is on display every month in both Teen Titans titles and if enough people ask politely, maybe we'll do a Catwoman mini-series.

The Huntress mini-series was held up by CRISIS because of what's happening to the various parallel Earths. The plot by Joey Cavalieri is in, editor Alan Gold has given it his seal of approval, so it shouldn't be too long before we announce when you can look for it.

*****

Dear Mr. Wein,

BATMAN #383 was an amusing change of pace from the usual deadly seriousness of The Batman's escapades, and I enjoyed it very much. Unfortunately, the quality of the Batman books has been uneven lately. Doug Moench has proven himself quite capable when tackling established Bat-characters like the Penguin, Scarecrow, Riddler, and the Joker. I don't want to discourage Doug from adding to the Batman mythos, but none of the characters he's created for the series has impressed me. I like Doug's Batman and I hope I'll soon be able to express similar sentiments about one of Doug's own characters.

I'm sorry to learn that Doug plans on resurrecting Ra's al Ghūl. Although I loved the character back in the O'Neil/Adams days, I think he's been overused and I don't care to see him again. Mike Barr wrote a fitting end to the Demon's Head in BATMAN ANNUAL #8, that should be the last we ever see of Ra's al Ghūl. Who would I like to see? The original Clayface! Also, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Two-Face, False Face, Maxie Zeus, and perhaps a new version of the Red Hood.

Carl Cafarelli
576 Libson Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14215

To correct an immediate misconception, we have not yet announced that Doug is writing a Ra's al Ghūl story. We only reported in this column that many readers are not tired of him and would like to see how Doug would handle such a complex and interesting character.

Doug has been really working at making Black Mask a truly superior Batman villain. Hopefully you agree and will write and tell us so.

*****

Dear Editor,

Y'know, Doug Moench is handling Batman and company so well that it's sometimes hard to imagine that anyone else has ever written them before. I gotta tell you, Doug was born to write these books.

I tend to favor the multi-issue sagas much more than single-issue stories because there's more room to develop an intriguing story and all that, but every now and then a single story comes along, and all too rare at that, that almost makes me change my mind. "Just as Night Follows Day..." is just one of those stories. A very good job was done at showing the fatigue of Bruce through the beginning of the story and I felt a genuine surge of adrenaline right along with him when the Batman went on the job. I've often wondered how someone could cope with two lives, when I have enough trouble coping with my one, but I can't recall one being done so well. Congrats to all involved.

Dan Coakley
16 Lewis Farm Road
Dedham, MA 02026

COMING ATTRACTIONS

By now you have all noticed Tom Mandrake's wonderful art gracing these pages. We're still a few issues away from getting to your mail on the subject, but do send along your comments. Next month, Tom gets a chance to tackle even more villains as Doug springs a rather nifty little surprise on both you and the Caped Crusader.

Last chance to find the BATMAN ANNUAL before they all disappear and get swamped with the rest of this year's record eighteen annuals and specials. Look for the John Totleben painted cover and treat yourselves to the "Four Faces of Batman," written by Mike W. Barr and illustrated by Dan Jurgens and Dick Giordano, Alex Nino, Jerry Ordway, and Paul Smith.

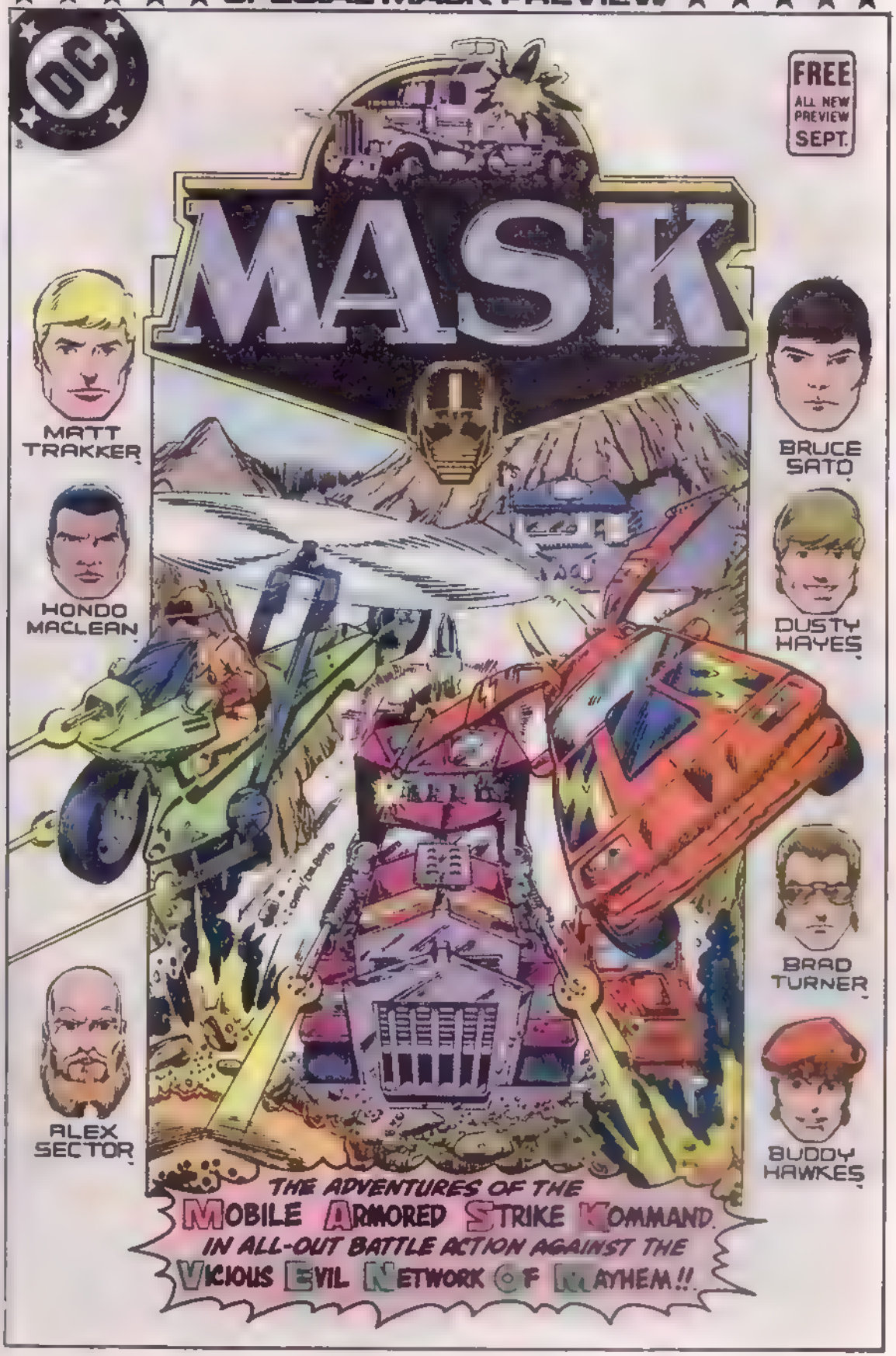
This month in CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #6, the heroes from Earths 1 and 2 go off to save three other parallel worlds before they too are destroyed. Meanwhile, Lex Luther and Brainiac round up a host of villains with plans of their own. Written by Marv Wolfman, illustrated by George Pérez and Jerry Ordway.

And over in WHO'S WHO #7, we go from D to F, including Bat-villain Dr. Tzin-Tzin, and an amazing array of characters including the legendary Easy Company, Enemy Ace, the Fatal Five, and the attractive Dolphin. Written and edited by Len, and this month with art from Joe Kubert, Dave Stevens, Tony DeZuniga, and many, many more!

Until next time, write letters and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SPECIAL MASK PREVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SPECIAL MASK PREVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MASK
ASSAULT ON MOUNT MAYHEM
AT WORLD-FAMED ARCHER GLEN SPEEDWAY, A LIGHTNING-SWIFT FORMULA-ONE RACER FLASHES ACROSS THE FINISH LINE...
THE WINNER BY TWO AND A HALF LAPS, SETTING A NEW TRACK RECORD, MATT TRAKKER!!
IN THE COCKPIT MATT TRAKKER, WEALTHY ADVENTURER AND SPORTSMAN...
SCRIPT BY: MICHAEL FLEISHER • PENCILS BY: MIKE CHEN • INKS BY: JOE DELBEATO
COLORS BY: GENE D'ANGELO • LETTERS BY: TIM HARKINS • EDITED BY: ANDREW HELFER

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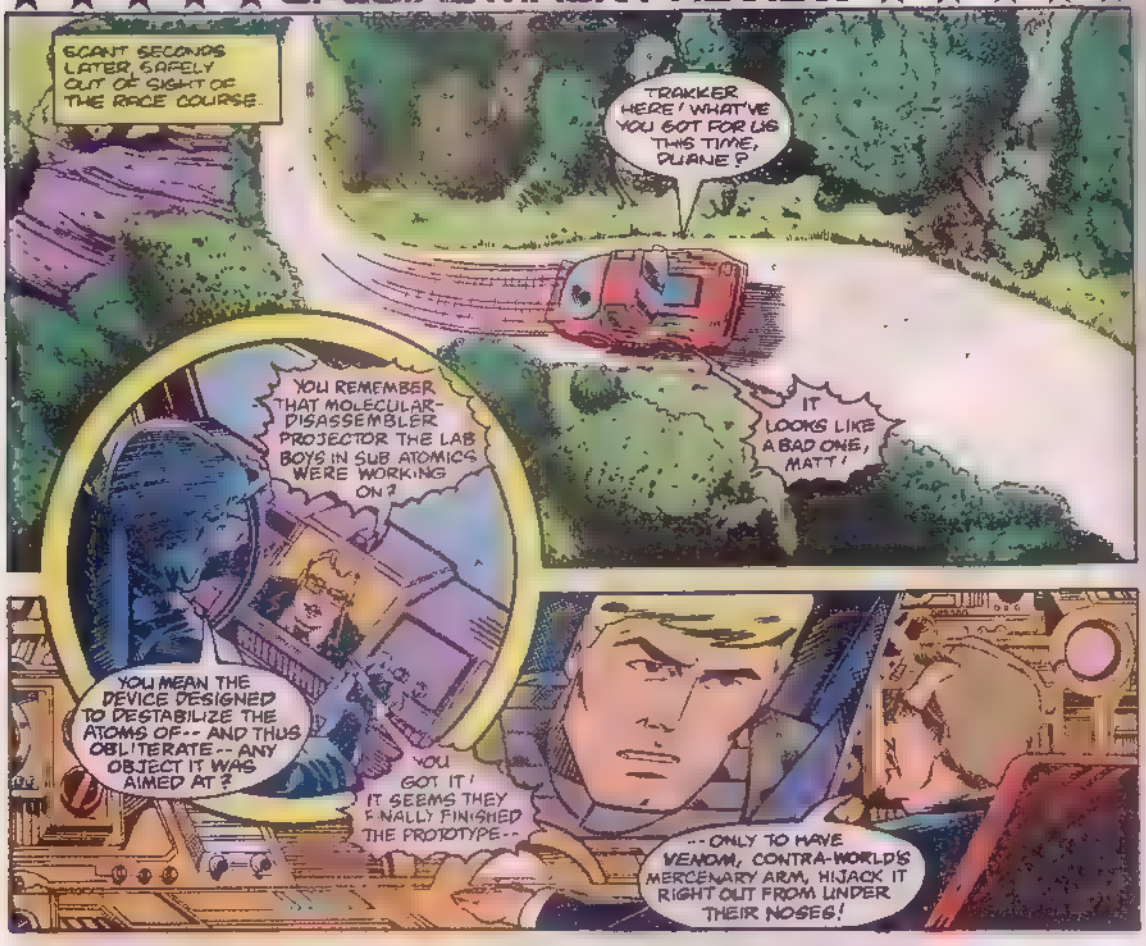
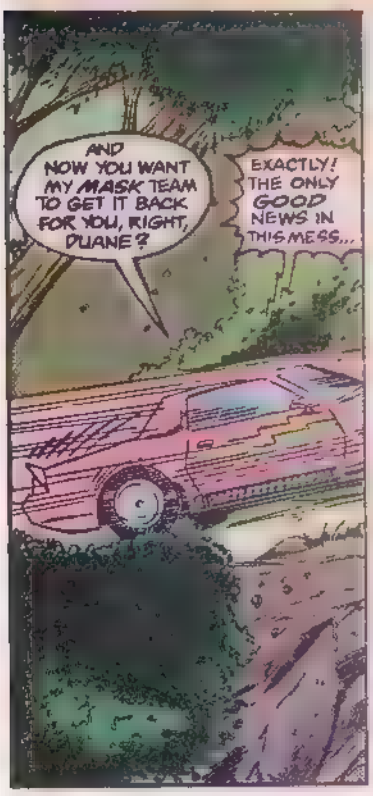
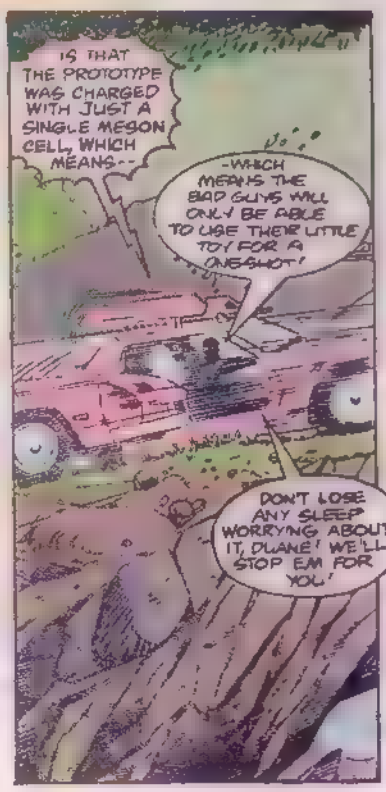
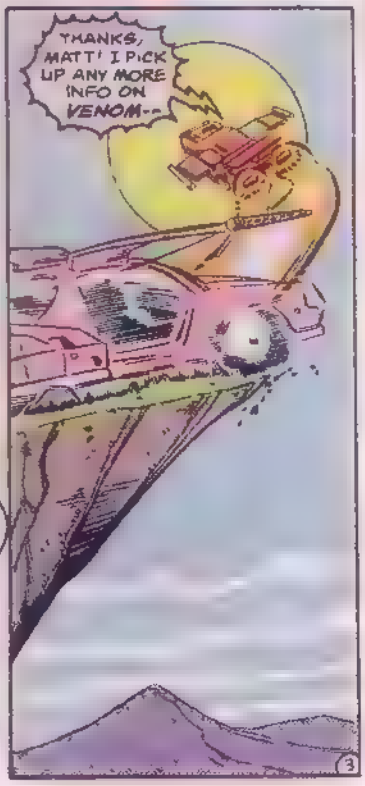
WHEW! WHAT A RACE, MATT!
GREAT DRIVING, MATT!
THANKS, GUYS! BUT I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU FOLKS IN THE PIT CREW!
BETTER HURRY, MATT! THEY'RE ABOUT SET TO AWARD THE TROPHY!
OKAY, DAVE! I'LL -
BEEP BEEP
UH-OH! THAT'S THE THUNDERHAWK'S CODED ELECTRONIC DASHBOARD SIGNAL!
ONLY ONE THING THAT CAN MEAN: DUANE KEENED IS TRYING TO CONTACT ME ON URGENT P.N.A.* BUSINESS!
BEEP BEEP!
* PEACEFUL NATIONS ALLIANCE.--ED
CAN'T GO! I'M SURPRISED, EITHER!
HEY! WHERE THE DEVIL'S MATT OFF TO?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE NOW SINCE THOSE CREEPS FROM CONTRA-WORLD TRIED TO PULL OFF SOMETHING NASTY AGAINST THE FREE WORLD!
EXIT
VROOOM!
HEY, MATT! WHAT ABOUT THE TROPHY?


SCANT SECONDS LATER, SAFELY OUT OF SIGHT OF THE RACE COURSE...
TRAKKER HERE! WHAT'VE YOU GOT FOR US THIS TIME, DUANE?
IT LOOKS LIKE A BAD ONE, MATT!
YOU REMEMBER THAT MOLECULAR-DISASSEMBLER PROJECTOR THE LAB BOYS IN SUB ATOMICS WERE WORKING ON?
YOU MEAN THE DEVICE DESIGNED TO DESTABILIZE THE ATOMS OF-- AND THUS OBLITERATE-- ANY OBJECT IT WAS AIMED AT?
YOU GOT IT! IT SEEMS THEY FINALLY FINISHED THE PROTOTYPE--
--ONLY TO HAVE VENOM, CONTRA-WORLD'S MERCENARY ARM, HIJACK IT RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THEIR NOSES!


AND NOW YOU WANT MY MASK TEAM TO GET IT BACK FOR YOU, RIGHT, DUANE?
EXACTLY! THE ONLY GOOD NEWS IN THIS MESS...

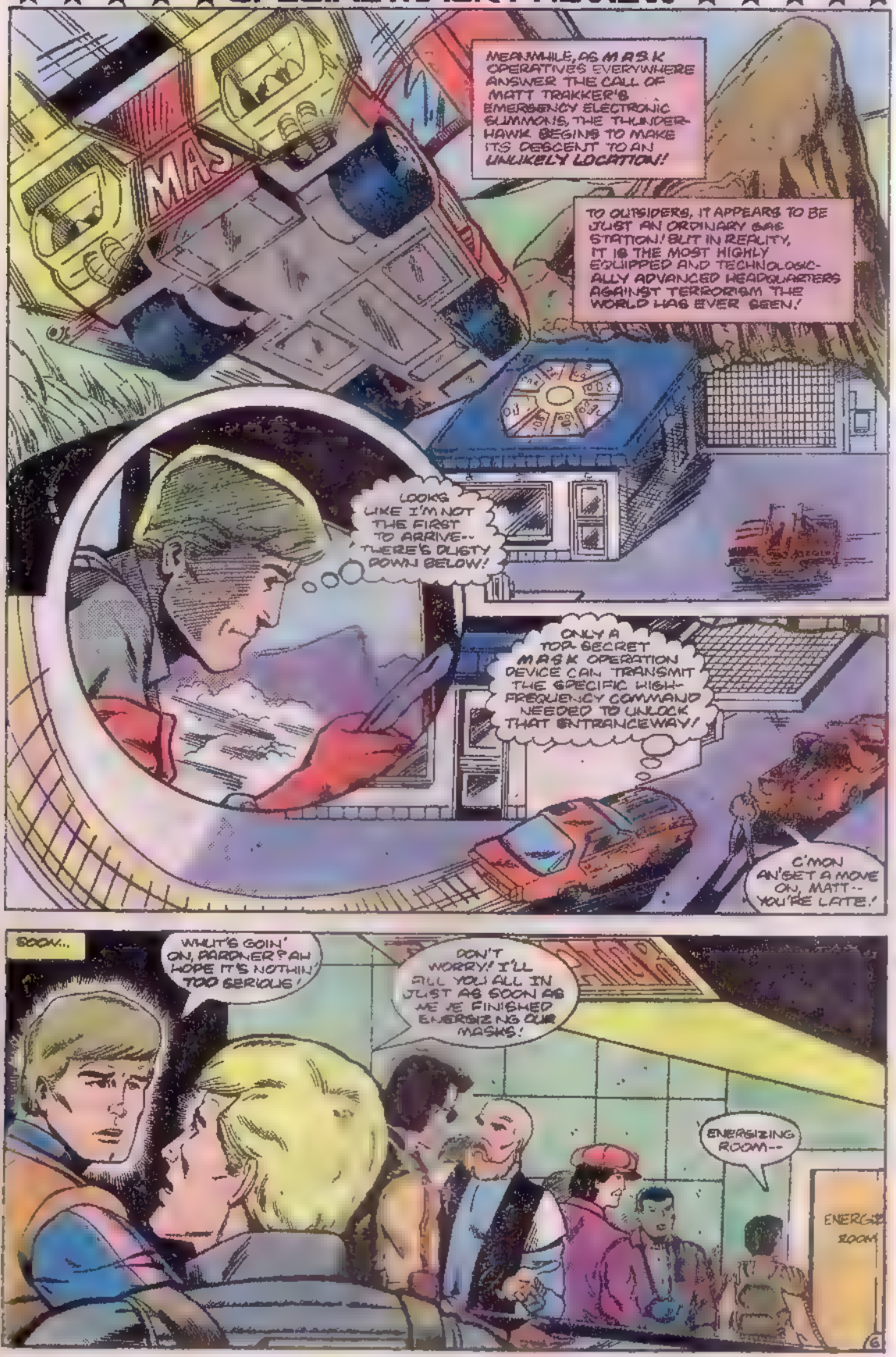

IS THAT THE PROTOTYPE WAS CHARGED WITH JUST A SINGLE MESON CELL, WHICH MEANS--
-WHICH MEANS THE BAD GUYS WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO USE THEIR LITTLE TOY FOR A ONESHOT!
DON'T LOSE ANY SLEEP WORRYING ABOUT IT, DUANE! WE'LL STOP 'EM FOR YOU!

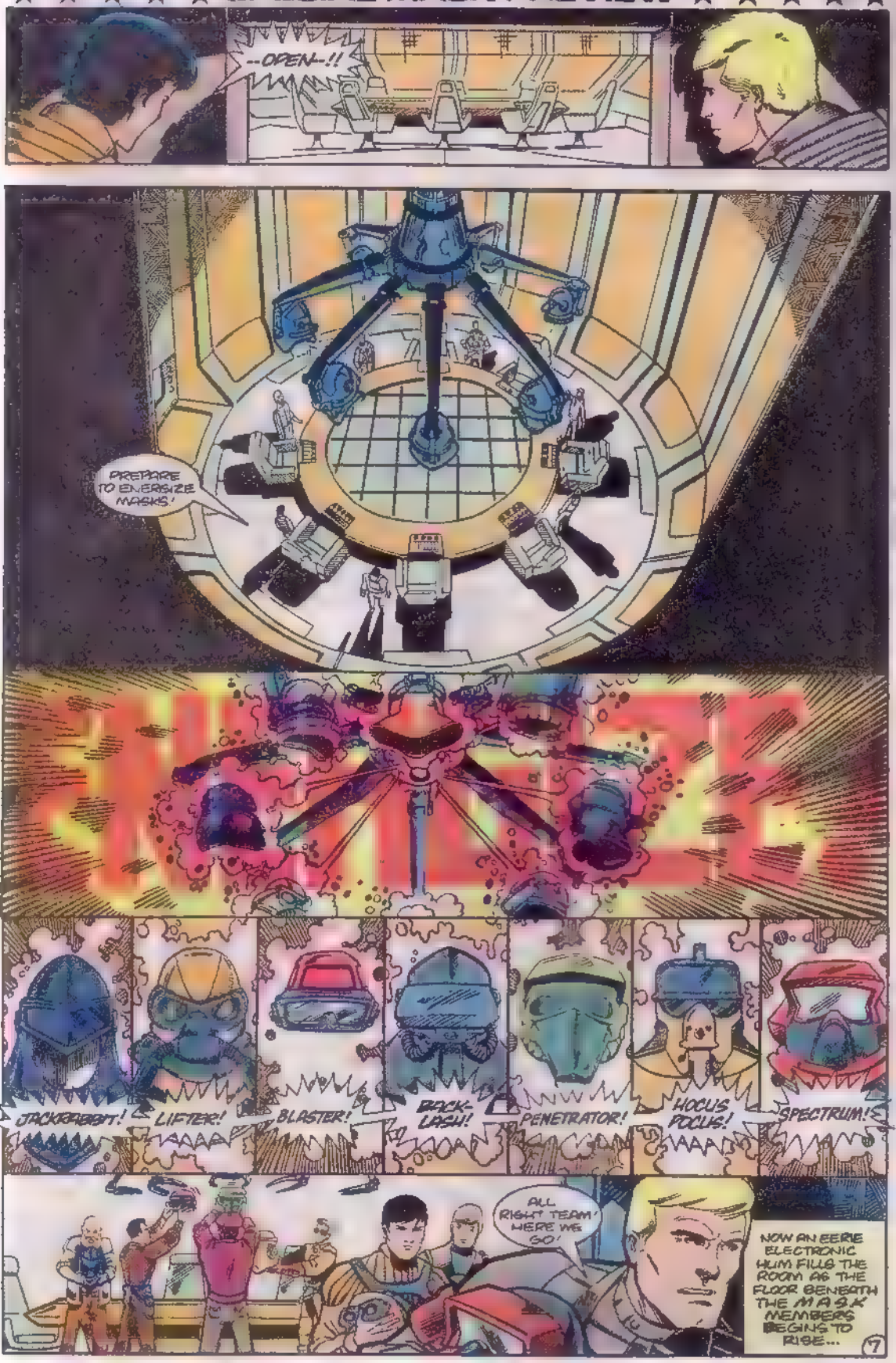

THANKS, MATT! I PICK UP ANY MORE INFO ON VENOM--
3

-- I'LL RAISE YOU ON THE SECRET FREQUENCY! OVER AND OUT!
OVER AND OUT!
NOW THAT THUNDERHAWK'S IN JET MODE, I OUGHT TO MAKE IT TO MASK'S SECRET BOULDER HILL HEADQUARTERS IN NO TIME! BUT WHILE I'M STILL AIRBORNE...
.. I'D BETTER SUMMON THE TEAM!
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
WELL, AH'LL BE HOME-FRIED AN' HOG-TIED!
PEARS LIKE THEM VENOM VARMINTS HAVE FINALLY CRAWLED OUT FROM UNDER THEIR ROCK AGAIN!
HEY THERE, DARLIN'! I'LL WON'T MIND ROPIN' HERD ON THEM PIES FOR AWHILE, WILL YA?
SEEMS LIKE A TRIBE OF ORNERY ANCHOVIES HAS BEGUN TO STAMPEDE OFF THE OBSERVATION...
.. AN SOMEBODY'S GOTTA GO OUT THAR AN' ROUND THEM LITTLE CRITTERS UP AGAIN!
HUH!?

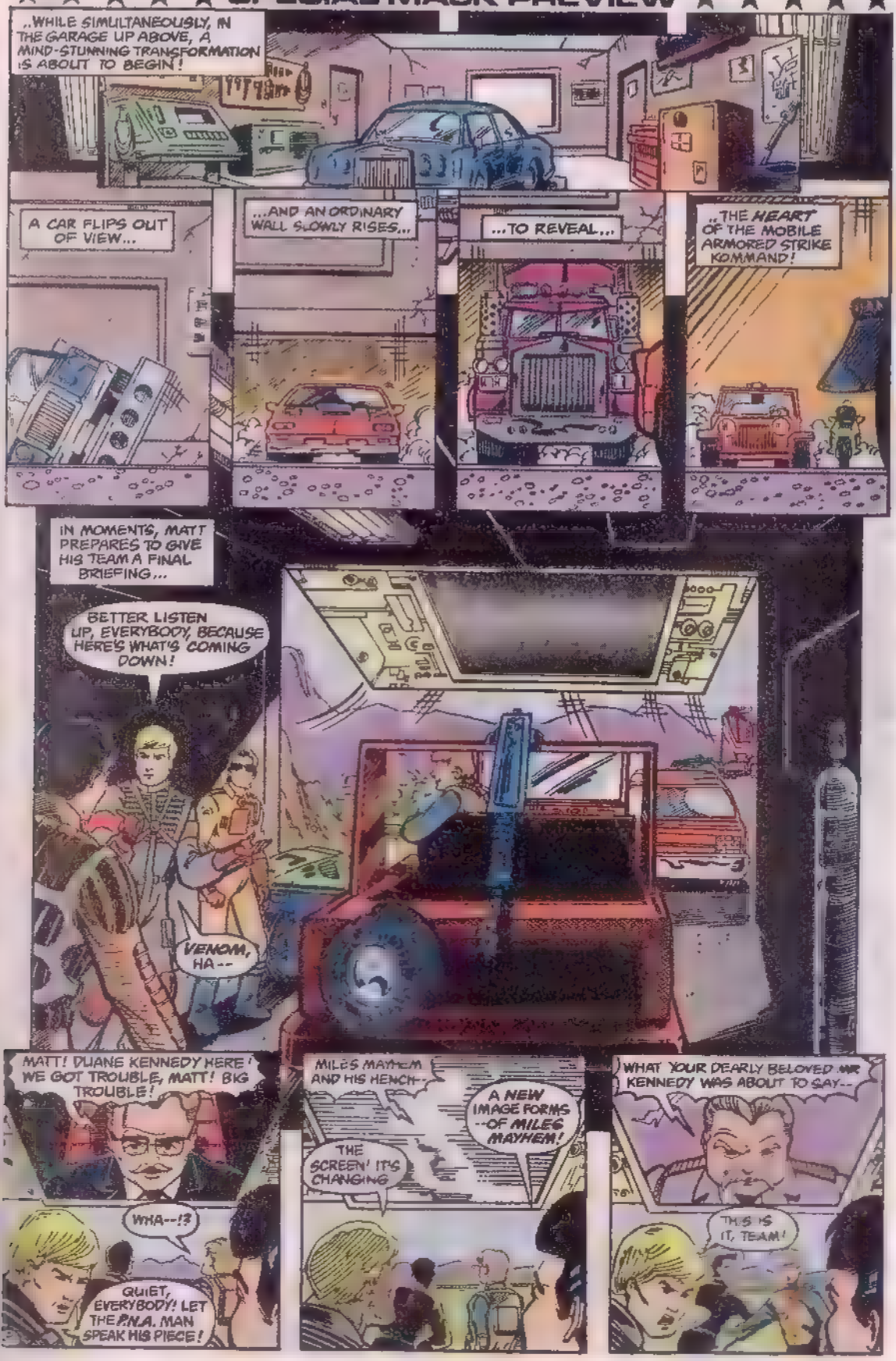
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SPECIAL MASK PREVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
BRAD CHOPP
HEY! I'M AWFULLY FLATTERED YOU GUYS WANT MY AUTOGRAPH!
YOU PLAY THE BADDEST GUITAR AROUND, CHOPPER!
YEAH! NOBODY- BUT- NOBODY--- CAN PLAY MEANER RIFFS THAN YOU DO!
UH- OH! SOMETHING'S WRONG!
WHY, NEXT TO BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN...
HUH-?
NOW SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE, STEVIE! YOU INSULTED HIM!
BRUCE SATO INSPIRED TOY DESIGN
OH! NO!
BEEP!
ONCE MORE THE LITTLE MONGOOSE IS SUMMONED FORTH TO BATTLE THE WILY COBRA!


MEANWHILE, AS M.A.S.K. OPERATIVES EVERYWHERE ANSWER THE CALL OF MATT TRAKKER'S EMERGENCY ELECTRONIC SUMMONS, THE THUNDER-HAWK BEGINS TO MAKE ITS DESCENT TO AN UNLIKELY LOCATION!
TO OUTSIDERS, IT APPEARS TO BE JUST AN ORDINARY GAS STATION! BUT IN REALITY, IT IS THE MOST HIGHLY EQUIPPED AND TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED HEADQUARTERS AGAINST TERRORISM THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN!
LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT THE FIRST TO ARRIVE-- THERE'S DUSTY DOWN BELOW!
ONLY A TOP SECRET M.A.S.K. OPERATION DEVICE CAN TRANSMIT THE SPECIFIC HIGH-FREQUENCY COMMAND NEEDED TO UNLOCK THAT ENTRANCEWAY!
C'MON AN'GET A MOVE ON, MATT-- YOU'RE LATE!
BOOM...
WHUT'S GOIN' ON, PARDNER? AH HOPE IT'S NOTHIN' TOO SERIOUS!
DON'T WORRY! I'LL FILL YOU ALL IN JUST AS SOON AS WE'VE FINISHED ENERGIZING OUR MASKS!
ENERGIZING ROOM--
ENERGIZ ROOM
6

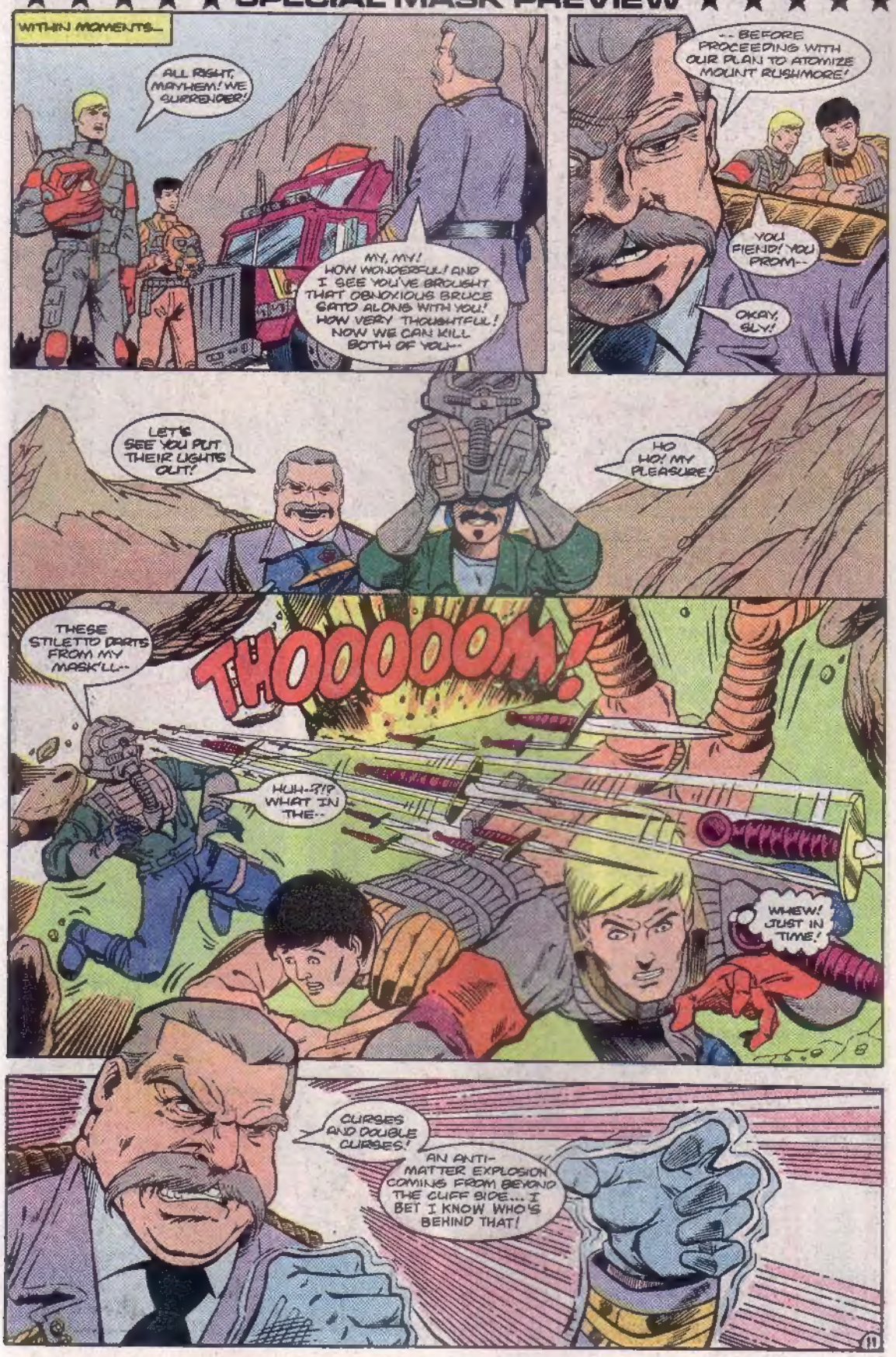

--OPEN--!!
PREPARE TO ENERGIZE MASKS!
JACKRABBIT!
LIFTER!
BLASTER!
BACK-LASH!
PENETRATOR!
HOCUS POCUS!
SPECTRUM!
ALL RIGHT TEAM! HERE WE GO!
NOW AN EERIE ELECTRONIC HUM FILLS THE ROOM AS THE FLOOR BENEATH THE MASK MEMBERS BEGINS TO RISE...

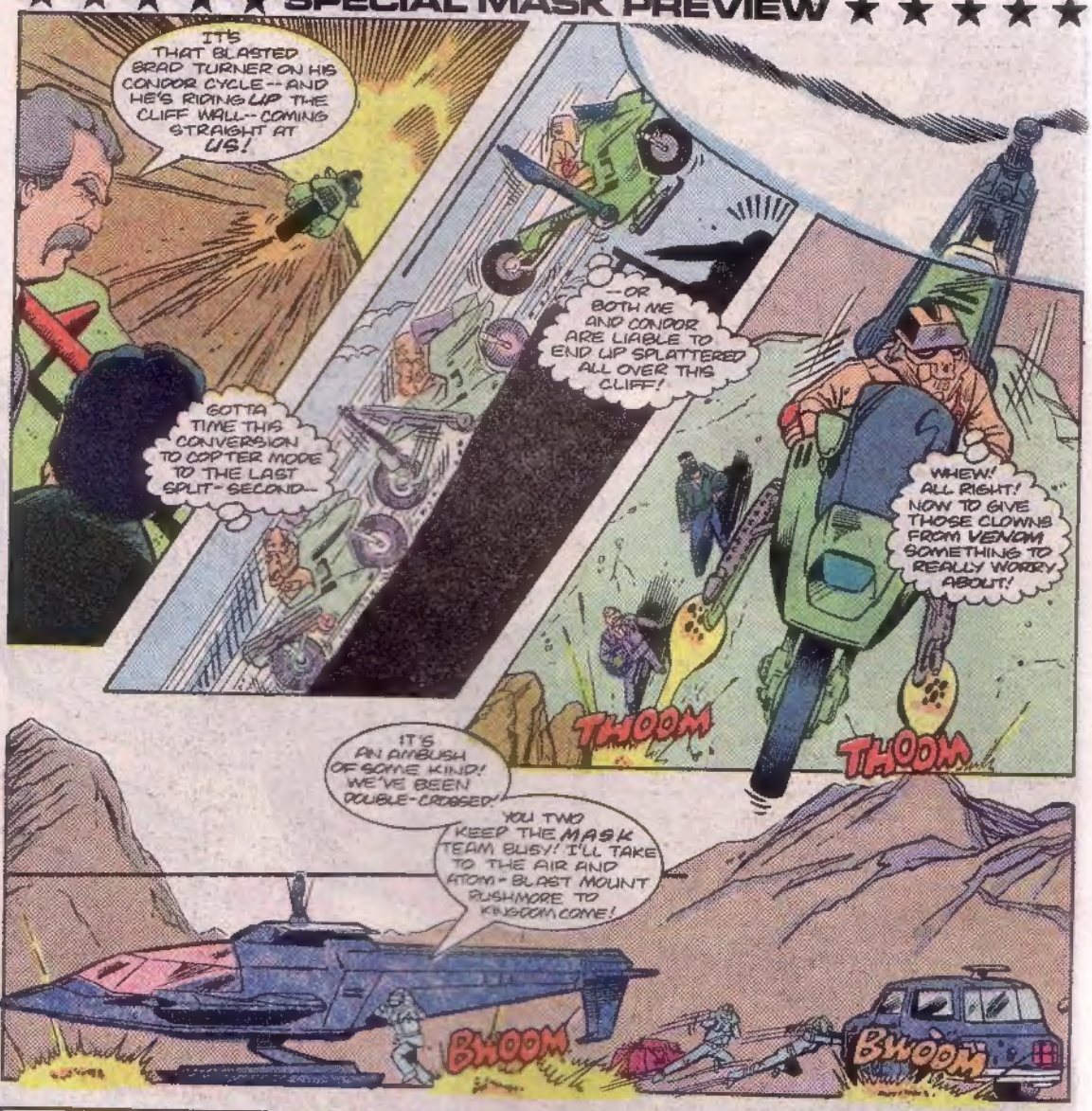
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SPECIAL MASK PREVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★


..WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN THE GARAGE UP ABOVE, A MIND-STUNNING TRANSFORMATION IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!
A CAR FLIPS OUT OF VIEW...
...AND AN ORDINARY WALL SLOWLY RISES...
...TO REVEAL...
..THE HEART OF THE MOBILE ARMORED STRIKE KOMMAND!
IN MOMENTS, MATT PREPARES TO GIVE HIS TEAM A FINAL BRIEFING...
BETTER LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY, BECAUSE HERE'S WHAT'S COMING DOWN!
VENOM, HA--
MATT! DUANE KENNEDY HERE! WE GOT TROUBLE, MATT! BIG TROUBLE!
WHA--!?
QUIET, EVERYBODY! LET THE P.N.A. MAN SPEAK HIS PIECE!
MILES MAYHEM AND HIS HENCH--
A NEW IMAGE FORMS --OF MILES MAYHEM!
THE SCREEN! IT'S CHANGING
WHAT YOUR DEARLY BELOVED MR KENNEDY WAS ABOUT TO SAY--
THIS IS IT, TEAM!

--IS THAT I, THE INGENIOUS NILES MAYHEM, GLORIOUS LEADER OF VENOM, HAVE, WITH THE AID OF MY CONFEDERATES CLIFF DAGGER AND SLY RAY, JUST STORMED THE MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MONUMENT--
--AND TAKEN ALL THE STAFF AND SIGHTSEERS HERE HOSTAGE!
GOOD GRIEF! WHAT AWFUL TIMING! SCOTT* IS OUT VISITING MOUNT RUSHMORE TODAY AS PART OF A CLASS HISTORY PROJECT!
*MATT'S ADOPTED SON --ED
UNLESS YOUR LEADER, THAT SANCTIMONIOUS DO-GOODER MATT TRAKKER, SURRENDERS HIMSELF TO ME WITHIN THREE HOURS' TIME--
--I WILL USE THE MOLECULAR-DISASSEMBLER, MOUNTED ON MY SWITCHBLADE COPTER TO OBLITERATE MOUNT RUSHMORE AND THE CAPTIVE TOURISTS ALONG WITH IT...
..INCLUDING, OF COURSE, MATT TRAKKER'S INSUFFERABLE LITTLE BRAT..!
MATT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
THE ONLY THING I CAN DO, BRUCE!
I'M GOING TO DO WHAT HE SAYS!
BUT, MATT! HE SAID THREE HOURS! HOW CAN WE POSS--
WE'LL LOAD THUNDERHAWK, CONDOR, AND THE RHINO RIG ONTO THE JET TRANSPORT!
COME ON-- I'VE ALREADY GOT A PLAN--

"—WE CAN BRAINSTORM THE DETAILS ON THE WAY!"
HE AIN'T GONNA COME, BOSS! WHY SHOULD HE? HE AIN'T NO DUMMY! HE KNOWS WE'RE JUST GONNA RUB HIM OUT!
MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T COME, RAY, IF THE SITUATION WERE REVERSED! BUT TRAKKER WILL COME—
EVEN IF HE CHANGES OF SAVING THOSE PEOPLE AND GETTING OUT ALIVE ARE NO BETTER THAN A THOUSAND TO ONE!
EH..? THAT SOUND, IS IT..?
HERE THEY COME
UH SCOTT! I MAY ONLY BE YOUR ROBOT PAL, BUT I'M STILL SCARED!
DON'T WORRY, T-BOB! DAD AND THE MASK TEAM WILL SAVE US!
I (GULP) HOPE!


★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SPECIAL MASK PREVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
WITHIN MOMENTS...
ALL RIGHT, MAYHEM! WE SURRENDER!
MY, MY! HOW WONDERFUL! AND I SEE YOU'VE BROUGHT THAT OBNOXIOUS BRUCE BATO ALONG WITH YOU! HOW VERY THOUGHTFUL! NOW WE CAN KILL BOTH OF YOU--
-- BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH OUR PLAN TO ATOMIZE MOUNT RUSHMORE!
YOU FIEND! YOU PROM--
OKAY, SLY!
LET'S SEE YOU PUT THEIR LIGHTS OUT!
HO HO! MY PLEASURE!
THESE STILETTO DARTS FROM MY MASK'LL--
THOOOOOM!
HUH--?!? WHAT IN THE--
WHEW! JUST IN TIME!
CURSES AND DOUBLE CURSES!
AN ANTI-MATTER EXPLOSION COMING FROM BEYOND THE CLIFF SIDE... I BET I KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THAT!

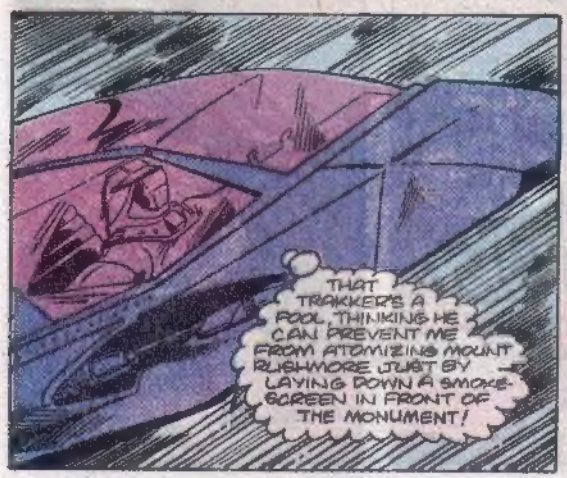

IT'S THAT BLASTED BRAD TURNER ON HIS CONDOR CYCLE -- AND HE'S RIDING UP THE CLIFF WALL -- COMING STRAIGHT AT US!
GOTTA TIME THIS CONVERSION TO COPTER MODE TO THE LAST SPLIT-SECOND--
--OR BOTH ME AND CONDOR ARE LIABLE TO END UP SPLATTERED ALL OVER THIS CLIFF!
WHEW! ALL RIGHT! NOW TO GIVE THOSE CLOWNS FROM VENOM SOMETHING TO REALLY WORRY ABOUT!
THOOM
THOOM
IT'S AN AMBUSH OF SOME KIND! WE'VE BEEN DOUBLE-CROSSED!
YOU TWO KEEP THE MASK TEAM BUSY! I'LL TAKE TO THE AIR AND ATOM-BLAST MOUNT RUSHMORE TO KINGDOM COME!
BWOOM
BWOOM

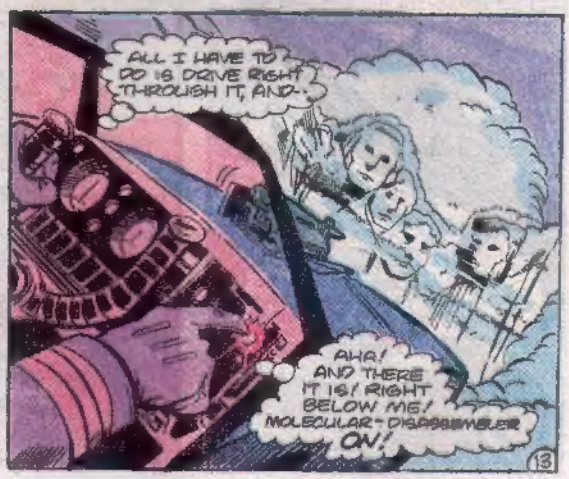
HMM-- TRAKKER'S JUST BELOW ME, GETTING INTO HIS THUNDERHAWK-- PERHAPS I'LL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY!

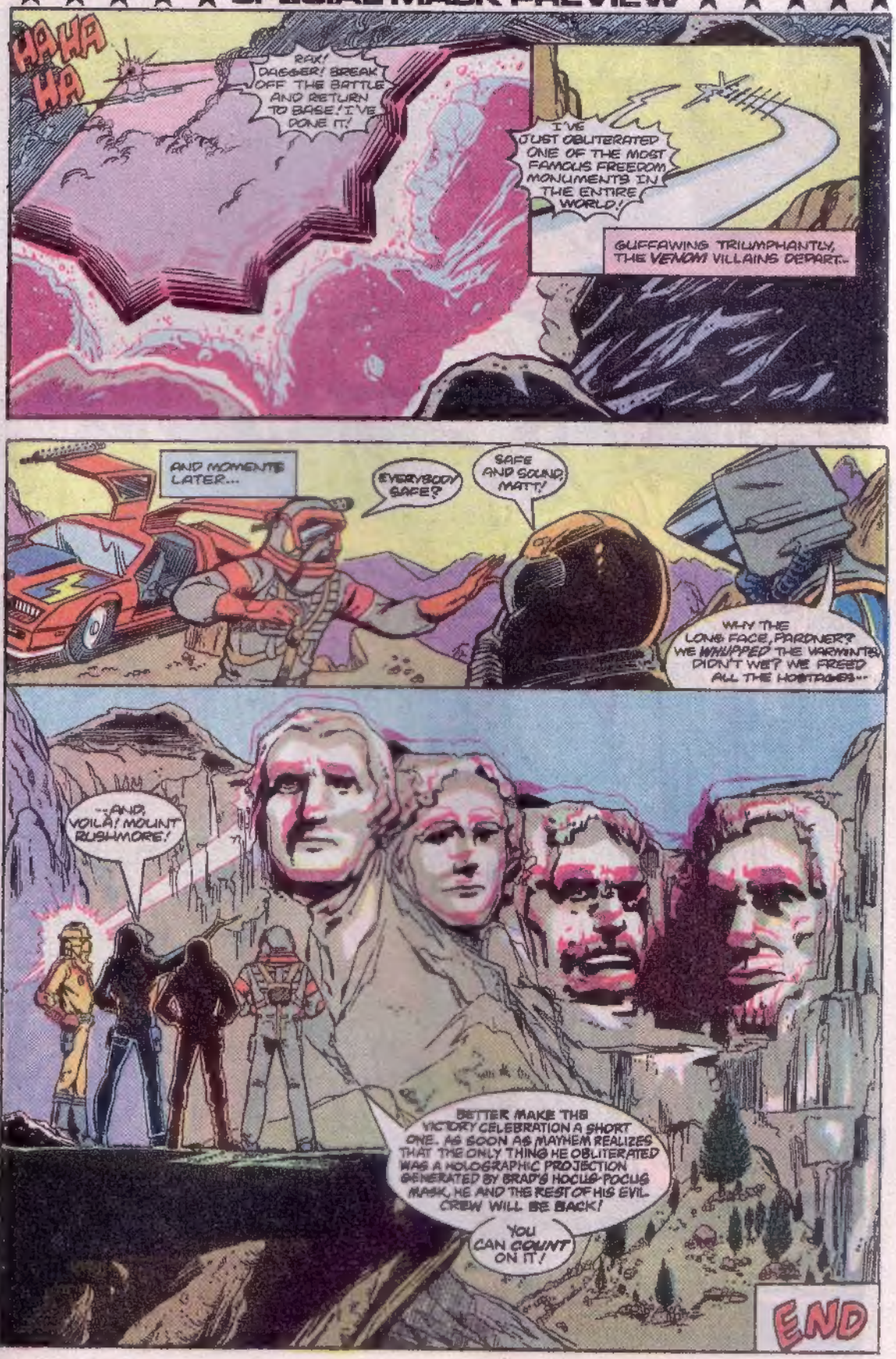
HE'S TRANSFORMED INTO HIS JET MODE-- AND NOW HE'S COMING BACK-- FOR A PARTING SHOT AT ME! GOTTA GET MOVING, BUT BEFORE I DO--
BRUCE! HELP BRAD FIGHT DAGGER AND RAX!

COME ON, TRAKKER-- IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO TRY TO STOP ME-- IF YOU DARE!!

YOU GOT IT, MAYHEM!
I'M GOING TO TRY TO SET UP A SMOKE-SCREEN BETWEEN MAYHEM AND THE MONUMENT, BRUCE! YOU'D BETTER--
I KNOW, MATT!
THOSE TOURISTS ARE IN DANGER--
--BUT WITH MY LIFTER MASK I CAN CARRY THEM ALL OUT OF HARM'S WAY!
AND, MOMENTS LATER, THE BATTLE COMMENCES!
FWASH
BUDOOOM
BUDOOM
VENOM
RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT


THAT TRAKKER'S A FOOL, THINKING HE CAN PREVENT ME FROM ATOMIZING MOUNT RUSHMORE JUST BY LAYING DOWN A SMOKE-SCREEN IN FRONT OF THE MONUMENT!


ALL I HAVE TO DO IS DRIVE RIGHT THROUGH IT, AND--
AHA! AND THERE IT IS! RIGHT BELOW ME! MOLECULAR-DISASSEMBLER ON!


HA HA HA
ROX! DAGGER! BREAK OFF THE BATTLE AND RETURN TO BASE! I'VE DONE IT!
I'VE JUST OBLITERATED ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS FREEDOM MONUMENTS IN THE ENTIRE WORLD!
GUFFAWING TRIUMPHANTLY, THE VENOM VILLAINS DEPART...
AND MOMENTS LATER...
EVERYBODY SAFE?
SAFE AND SOUND, MATT!
WHY THE LONG FACE, PARDNER? WE WHUPPED THE VARMINTS! DIDN'T WE? WE FREED ALL THE HOSTAGES!...
...AND, VOILA! MOUNT RUSHMORE!
BETTER MAKE THE VICTORY CELEBRATION A SHORT ONE. AS SOON AS MAYHEM REALIZES THAT THE ONLY THING HE OBLITERATED WAS A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION GENERATED BY BRAD'S HOCUS-POCUS MASK, HE AND THE REST OF HIS EVIL CREW WILL BE BACK!
YOU CAN COUNT ON IT!
END